

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/19/35a)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

22 October 2019

Agenda Item 12.1

ANNUAL REPORT ON PLAGIARISM AND OTHER FORMS OF CHEATING  
OFFENCES IN 2018/19

COVER SHEET

*Presenter: Mr A G Faulkner*

Action is required of the Committee as indicated below:

| Item | Topic           | Action                           |
|------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 9    | Recommendations | To consider the recommendations. |

## **ANNUAL REPORT ON PLAGIARISM AND OTHER FORMS OF CHEATING OFFENCES IN 2018/19**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

The Annual Report on Plagiarism and Other Forms of Cheating Offences in 2018/19 comprises data from the Central Register and Faculty commentaries. The 2018/19 Annual Report differs from previous years' reports in that it includes information on instances of contract cheating, cheating in examinations and other forms of cheating. Following the publication of a report on 'Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education, how to address Contract Cheating, the use of Third-Party Services and Essay Mills' by QAA in October 2017, the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee agreed that the Plagiarism Register should be extended and Faculties record all forms of cheating from 2018/19 (Min 18.67 refers).

The record of plagiarism offences is set out in Appendix 1 and analysed by Faculty in Appendix 2. The number of recorded plagiarism offences in 2018/19 is lower than in previous years, involving less than one percent of the student population. Unlike the previous year, in which more offences occurred at Level 5 than at any other level, in 2018/19 more offences occurred at Level 6 than at any other level. The number of offences at Level 4 and Level 5 were lower in 2018/19 than in previous years, with nearly 50% less offences at Level 5 than in 2017/18. There was a slight increase in the reported number of instances of plagiarism at postgraduate level in 2018/19. The vast majority of offences in 2018/19, as in previous years, were first offences, with a small number of second offences and one third offence. The overall level of plagiarism offences remains low.

The record of instances of cheating in examinations, contract cheating and other forms of cheating is set out at Section 4 of the annual report. The absence of University-wide data from previous years means that no comparison is made with previous years.

### **2 RECORDING OF OFFENCES ON THE CENTRAL REGISTER IN 2018/19**

#### **Offences recorded in 2018/19**

The report generated from the Central Register for 2018/19 covers the period 10 September 2018 (the day after the deadline for entering offences for 2017/18) to 10 September 2019 (the day after the deadline for entering offences for 2018/19). Unless otherwise stated, the following observations are therefore based on that period. The record relates to University students (including those at outcentres and QAHE). The Central Register does not hold records for Associate Students of partner institutions, nor for PhD research students but the Doctoral College reports separately on the latter.

The total number of plagiarism offences (relating to taught courses) recorded on the Central Register for 2018/19 is 161 (124 undergraduate (77%); 37 postgraduate (23%)). This is lower (12%) than the 183 offences recorded for 2017/18 at 10 September 2018. The total number of cases recorded on the Central Register for 2018/19 rises slightly to 169 when cases for that academic year recorded after the reporting cut-off date are included (as at 8 October 2019).

During 2018/19 only 12 instances of cheating in examinations were recorded on the Central Register and three instances of other forms of cheating. No cases of contract cheating were recorded.

### 3 INSTANCES OF PLAGIARISM RECORDED ON THE CENTRAL REGISTER IN 2018/19

**Table 3.1. Distribution of Plagiarism Offences across Levels of Study comparing Data for 2018/19 and 2017/18**

| Level of Study          | Number of Cases in 2018/19 | Number of Cases in 2017/18 |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Level 4                 | 26 (16%)                   | 38 (20.8%)                 |
| Level 5                 | 37 (23%)                   | 75 (41.0%)                 |
| Level 6<br>(UG award)   | 40 (25%)                   | 35 (19.1%)                 |
| Level 6<br>(PG award)   | 21 (13%)                   | 0                          |
| Postgraduate<br>Level 7 | 37 (23%)                   | 35 (19.1%)                 |

Compared to 2017/18 there has been a decrease in the number of offences at Levels 4 and 5, but a noticeable increase in the number of offences at Level 6, particularly in postgraduate courses, and a slight increase at Level 7.

**Table 3.2. Comparison of Type of Plagiarism Offence in 2018/19 and 2017/18**

| Offence        | Number of Cases in 2018/19 | Number of Cases in 2017/18 |
|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| First Offence  | 146 (90.7%)                | 174 (95.1%)                |
| Second Offence | 14 (8.7%)                  | 9 (4.9%)                   |
| Third Offence  | 1 (0.6%)                   | 0                          |
| Fourth Offence | 0                          | 0                          |

As in previous years, the majority of cases recorded were first offences, suggesting that the remedial action taken has generally been effective in deterring repeat offences. The number of first offences has decreased by 16%, while the number of second offences has increased by 55% (albeit from a small base of nine offences). One third offence has been recorded for 2018/19.

**Table 3.3. Distribution of Type of Plagiarism Offences across Levels of Study in 2018/19**

|                               | <b>1<sup>st</sup><br/>Offence</b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup><br/>Offence</b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup><br/>Offence</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup><br/>Offence</b> | <b>Total</b>   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Level 4</b>                | <b>24 (37)</b>                    | <b>2 (1)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>26 (38)</b> |
| <b>Level 5</b>                | <b>37 (70)</b>                    | <b>0 (5)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>37 (75)</b> |
| <b>Level 6<br/>(UG award)</b> | <b>36 (33)</b>                    | <b>4 (2)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>40 (35)</b> |
| <b>Level 6<br/>(PG award)</b> | <b>13 (0)</b>                     | <b>7 (0)</b>                      | <b>1 (0)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>21 (0)</b>  |
| <b>Postgraduate</b>           | <b>36 (34)</b>                    | <b>1 (1)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      | <b>37 (35)</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>146 (174)</b>                  | <b>14 (9)</b>                     | <b>1 (0)</b>                      | <b>0 (0)</b>                      |                |

*Figures in brackets relate to 2017/18.*

### **Level 4 Offences**

The number of Level 4 first offences has decreased from 37 in 2017/18 to 24 in 2018/19. Two second offences were recorded at Level 4 in 2018/19, while no third or fourth offences were recorded.

### **Level 5 Offences**

Recorded offences at Level 5 decreased by almost half from 2017/18 to 2018/19.

### **Level 6 Offences (Undergraduate Award)**

There was a slight increase in the number of offences recorded at this level during 2018/19 compared with 2017/18.

### **Level 6 Offences (Postgraduate Award)**

These offences relate to extended Master's programmes delivered at QAHE (MSc International Business (Birmingham and London) and MSc Marketing (London)). Thirteen first offences, seven second offences and one third offence at this level were recorded. All repeat offences recorded on the Central Register by the Ulster University Business School relate to students at QAHE.

It is worth noting that, after the cut-off date for entering offences on the Central Register, one of the additions to the Register was a student on the extended MSc International Business course at QAHE (London) with first, second, third and fourth plagiarism offences. Another student on the same course with first and second offences was also added to the Register after the cut-off date.

### **Postgraduate Offences**

The number of postgraduate (Level 7) offences remained almost the same in 2018/19 as in 2017/18. One second offence was recorded and no third or fourth offences were recorded for 2018/19.

**4 INSTANCES OF CHEATING IN EXAMINATIONS, CONTRACT CHEATING AND OTHER FORMS OF CHEATING RECORDED ON THE CENTRAL REGISTER IN 2018/19**

**Table 4.1. Distribution of Cheating Offences across Levels of Study**

|                           | <b>Cheating in Exams</b> | <b>Contract Cheating</b> | <b>Other Forms of Cheating</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Level 4</b>            | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                 | <b>1 (33.3%)</b>               |
| <b>Level 5</b>            | <b>4 (33.3%)</b>         | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                       |
| <b>Level 6 (UG award)</b> | <b>8 (66.7%)</b>         | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                       |
| <b>Level 6 (PG award)</b> | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                       |
| <b>Postgraduate</b>       | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                 | <b>2 (66.7%)</b>               |

The majority of instances of cheating in examinations occurred at Level 6, while there were no recorded cases at Level 4. There were three recorded cases of ‘other forms of cheating’; one at Level 4 and two at postgraduate level.

**Table 4.2. Type of Cheating Offence**

|                       | <b>Cheating in Exams</b> | <b>Contract Cheating</b> | <b>Other Forms of Cheating</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>First Offence</b>  | <b>11 (91.7%)</b>        | <b>0</b>                 | <b>3 (100%)</b>                |
| <b>Second Offence</b> | <b>1 (8.3%)</b>          | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                       |
| <b>Third Offence</b>  | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                       |
| <b>Fourth Offence</b> | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                       |

All except one of the recorded instances of cheating in examinations were first offences, as were the three cases of ‘other forms of cheating’. Faculties have not recorded the detail of these in the Register. The nature of other offences is therefore to be found in Faculty narratives (Annex).

No cases of contract cheating were recorded during 2018/19. The Ulster University Business School report comments on a pilot investigation into the scale of contract cheating. During 2017/18, contract cheating offences were recorded by the Ulster University Business School and by the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The four contract cheating offences were not included in the data provided in the 2017/18 annual report, but reference was made to them in the two Faculty reports.

## 5 ACCURACY OF DATA

As offences are recorded on the Central Register against the date they occur, rather than by the date they are entered on the register, discrepancies may arise depending on the date the report is run from the Central Register. This is not the case for 2018/19 but two Faculties report different totals of offences (see table 5.1 and Annex).

Plagiarism offences are recorded on the Register using codes 'UP1/2/3/4' (undergraduate) or 'PP1/2/3/4' (postgraduate). Cases of contract cheating are recorded using codes 'UC1/2/3/4' or 'PC1/2/3/4' and instances of other forms of cheating are recorded using codes 'UO1/2/3' or 'PO1/2/3/4'. Cases of cheating in examinations are recorded using the code 'EX1/2/3/4'. Faculties should ensure that the correct codes are used when recording offences (see notes below).

**Table 5.1. Plagiarism and Other Forms of Cheating Offences Recorded on the Central Register in 2018/19**

| Faculty  | Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences | Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment | Life and Health Sciences | Ulster University Business School | TOTAL  |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Cases reported by Faculty                          | 26                                   | 56   | 48                       | 55                                | 185  |
| Cases recorded on Central Register [as at 10.9.19] | 22                                   | 51   | 48                       | 55                                | 176<br>[161 plagiarism<br>12 cheating in exams<br>3 other forms of cheating] |

### Notes:

#### AHSS

- Three offences recorded as UC1 relate to plagiarism offences and have been counted as such in the annual report.

#### CEBE

- The same first offence at Level 5 was entered twice on the Central Register, therefore only one of these has been included in the data for the annual report;
- An offence recorded as PP1 relates to an undergraduate programme and has been counted as an undergraduate offence in the annual report;
- Two offences recorded as UP1 relate to postgraduate programmes and have been counted as postgraduate offences in the annual report;
- One offence recorded as UP1 relates to cheating in an examination and has been counted as such in the annual report.

#### UUBS

- A second offence has been recorded as PO2 but the first offence was recorded as PP1; the second offence has been counted as a second plagiarism offence in the annual report as no reference is made to an offence in the 'other' category in the Faculty's report;
- An offence recorded as UO1 refers to a plagiarism offence and has been counted as such in the annual report;
- An offence recorded as UP1 relates to a postgraduate programme and has been counted as a postgraduate offence in the annual report;
- An offence recorded as PO1 refers to a plagiarism offence and has been counted as such in the annual report;

- An offence recorded as UP1 relates to a postgraduate programme and has been counted as a postgraduate offence in the annual report.

## 6 SUMMARY OF REPORTS FROM FACULTIES, ACCESS, DIGITAL AND DISTRIBUTED LEARNING AND RESEARCH OFFICE

Faculties and Access, Digital and Distributed Learning, and the Doctoral College were asked this year to report on plagiarism offences, cheating in examinations, contract cheating and other forms of cheating recorded during 2018/19, and actions proposed, or taken, in light of the 2018/19 records. A summary and full reports are available at the Annex.

Appendix 2 sets out the plagiarism records by Faculty. The final two columns indicate the proportion of plagiarism offences recorded in each Faculty as well as the proportion of the student population (head count) in each. While somewhat crude, this serves as an approximate indicator, in the context of very low incidences and all other things being equal, of whether records are significantly above or below what might be expected. The two Faculties which sit at the extremes are Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (13% below its population) and Ulster University Business School (9% above its population). There is however no acceptable benchmark level. One may speculate as to the reasons for variability – extent of vigilance, complacency, effective assessment design, opportunity, ‘cultural factors’ – but Faculties will know how these factors relate to the extent of recorded plagiarism and the effectiveness of the measures taken to educate students on the topic and detect incidents.

**Table 6.1. Ratio of Offences to Students by Faculty**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| <b>Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</b>             | 1:304 |
| <b>Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment</b> | 1:113 |
| <b>Life and Health Sciences</b>                         | 1:143 |
| <b>Ulster University Business School</b>                | 1:107 |

The Doctoral College has confirmed that there were no instances of plagiarism, contract cheating or other forms of cheating identified during the 2018/19 academic year. [Reported for 2017/18: 0]

## 7 EXTERNAL EXAMINER COMMENTS

Two external examiners commented on the appropriateness of the University’s Framework of Penalties for Plagiarism in Taught Programmes in their 2018/19 reports.

### **BSc Hons Social Work**

External Examiner Comments: *“My only recommendation follows on from the case study this year which had a number of students identified for plagiarism. I was concerned that the University’s policy was to not mark the plagiarised work viewing this as poor academic practice. Whilst I would strongly support such a view for levels 4 and 5 I do not think that this is appropriate for level 6, when students have*

*already had 2 years to learn about acceptable academic practices. [...] Those students who plagiarise in the final year should have their assignment marked as a zero if plagiarism is confirmed. In other UK universities this is the case for other final year students.”*

The Committee should note that the University’s penalty for a first offence, regardless of level, is reduction of mark based on exclusion of plagiarised work – see Appendix 3 for Penalties.

### **MSc Fire Safety Engineering**

External Examiner Comments: *“A dissertation had substantial sections that had been plagiarised, including the entire discussion section and significant portions of the abstract, objectives and other areas. This had been identified and the dissertation re-marked. Since this was a first offence, under the University rules the updated mark ignored the plagiarised material but there were otherwise no consequences. [...] The university rules seem overly generous towards this sort of plagiarism. [...] Having rules where the consequences of this are simply to have work re-marked without consideration of the plagiarised material, can, as in this case, have no effect on the outcome for a student’s degree. I recommend these rules are re-considered and made more onerous.”*

## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

The number of plagiarism offences recorded during 2018/19 has decreased in comparison with the number of offences reported during the previous academic year.

The decrease in the number of plagiarism cases reported during the 2018/19 academic year could be attributed to a number of factors:

- a decrease in plagiarism within the University as a consequence of improved assessment design by staff;
- improved student awareness of the expectations of academic writing and the avoidance of plagiarism and of the plagiarism penalties;
- implementation of the University’s Electronic Management of Assessment and Feedback Policy.

A small number of cases of cheating in examinations and other forms of cheating have been recorded for 2018/19.

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) that Faculties take account of good practice highlighted in other Faculty reports, and ensure that the University’s Plagiarism Policy and Procedures and Penalties (2012) and Procedures for dealing with Other Forms of Cheating continue to be observed and rigorously applied across all programmes;
- (ii) that Faculties and Access, Digital and Distributed Learning ensure that all plagiarism offences and other forms of cheating in 2019/20 are recorded, using the correct code, at the time the offence is established and no later than the cut-off date of 9 September 2020;

- (iii) that Faculties, Access, Digital and Distributed Learning, and the Doctoral College provide a report on plagiarism and other forms of cheating to the Academic Office by 21 September 2020, with a commentary on issues arising and actions proposed or taken in light of the 2019/20 records;
- (iv) that, in light of the comments of two external examiners, members consider whether to revise the Framework of Penalties for Plagiarism Offences in Taught Programmes, in respect of first offences at Levels 6 and 7.

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PLAGIARISM OFFENCES (TAUGHT COURSES) RECORDED DURING 2018/19, 2017/18, 2016/17 and 2015/16**

| YEAR    | Number of undergraduate cases recorded |         |                    |                    | Number of postgraduate cases recorded | Number of cases recorded by Research Office | Number of cases recorded (undergraduate and postgraduate) |                         |                         |                         | Total number of cases recorded within the University |
|---------|--|---------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|
|         | Level 4                                | Level 5 | Level 6 [UG award] | Level 6 [PG award] |                                       |   | 1 <sup>st</sup> offence                                   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> offence | 3 <sup>rd</sup> offence | 4 <sup>th</sup> offence |  |
| 2018/19 | 26                                     | 37      | 40                 | 21                 | 37                                    | 0   | 146   | 14                      | 1                       | 0                       | 161*   |
| 2017/18 | 38                                     | 75      | 35                 | 0                  | 35                                    | 0   | 174   | 9                       | 0                       | 0                       | 183**  |
| 2016/17 | 55                                     | 42      | 69                 | 0                  | 50                                    | 0   | 205   | 10                      | 1                       | 0                       | 216 <sup>1</sup>                                     |
| 2015/16 | 67                                     | 87      | 90                 | 0                  | 80                                    | 0   | 284   | 37                      | 2                       | 1                       | 324 <sup>#</sup>                                     |

<sup>#</sup> This is the total number of plagiarism offences recorded on the central register as at 3 October 2016.

<sup>1</sup> An additional 3 cases for 2016/17 were entered on the central register after the cut-off date, bringing the total to 219 (as at 3 October 2017).

\*\* An additional 15 cases for 2017/18 were entered on the central register after the cut-off date, bringing the total to 198 (as at 11 October 2018).

\* An additional 8 cases for 2018/19 were entered on the central register after the cut-off date, bringing the total to 169 (as at 8 October 2019).

**PLAGIARISM OFFENCES RECORDED BY FACULTIES ON THE PLAGIARISM REGISTER FOR 2018/19 at 10.09.19**

| FACULTY  | Number of undergraduate cases recorded |           |                    |                    | Number of postgraduate cases recorded | Number of cases recorded by Research Office | Number of cases recorded (undergraduate and postgraduate) |                         |                         |                         | Total number of cases recorded within the Faculty | % of Total Offences | Student Population (%) 2018/19* |
|--|--|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | Level 4                                | Level 5   | Level 6 [UG award] | Level 6 [PG award] |                                       |   | 1 <sup>st</sup> offence                                   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> offence | 3 <sup>rd</sup> offence | 4 <sup>th</sup> offence |   |                     |                                 |
| Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences             | 3                                      | 7         | 6                  | 0                  | 5                                     | 0   | 21  | 0                       | 0                       | 0                       | 21  | 13%                 | 6394 (26.6%)                    |
| Computing, Engineering & the Built Environment | 9                                      | 18        | 11                 | 0                  | 4                                     | 0   | 39  | 3                       | 0                       | 0                       | 42  | 26%                 | 4733 (19.7%)                    |
| Life and Health Sciences                       | 6                                      | 6         | 21                 | 0                  | 15                                    | 0   | 45  | 3                       | 0                       | 0                       | 48  | 30%                 | 6854 (28.5%)                    |
| Ulster University Business School              | 8                                      | 6         | 2                  | 21                 | 13                                    | 0   | 41  | 8                       | 1                       | 0                       | 50  | 31%                 | 5357 (22.3%)                    |
| Access, Digital and Distributed Learning       | 0                                      | 0         | 0                  | 0                  | 0                                     | 0   | 0   | 0                       | 0                       | 0                       | 0   | 0%                  | 687 (2.9%)                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                   | <b>26</b>                              | <b>37</b> | <b>40</b>          | <b>21</b>          | <b>37</b>                             | <b>0</b>                                    | <b>146</b>  | <b>14</b>               | <b>1</b>                | <b>0</b>                | <b>161</b>  | <b>100%</b>         | <b>24025 (100%)</b>             |

\*Student Population 2018/19 (Academic Plan 19/20)

| 1 <sup>ST</sup> OFFENCE  | 2 <sup>ND</sup> OFFENCE  | 3 <sup>RD</sup> OFFENCE  | 4 <sup>TH</sup> OFFENCE  | PLAGIARISM DETECTED AFTER GRADUATION |
|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <p>Reduction in marks based on exclusion of plagiarised work.</p> <p>Formative interview with module co-ordinator and/or lecturer.</p> | <p>Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism.</p> <p>Interview with Head of School and/or Course/Subject Director and/or lecturer.</p> <p>Formal letter of reprimand from Head of School. Copy placed on student file.</p> | <p>Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism and maximum mark of 40% (UG) or 50% (PG) for coursework element<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>Case referred to Dean with recommendation of reprimand and fine not exceeding the maximum amount permitted under the Ordinance on Student Discipline at the time of application of penalty.</p> <p>Interview with Dean.</p> <p>Formal letter of reprimand from Dean. Copy placed on student file.</p> | <p>Mark of zero for module.</p> <p>Case referred to University Disciplinary Committee with recommendation of suspension (1 semester or 1 year as advised by Faculty) or discontinuation of studies at the University.</p> <p>Outcome recorded on student file.</p> | <p>The award may be revoked.</p>     |

<sup>1</sup> 'Assignment containing plagiarism' means the assignment which contains the plagiarised material, and not all the assessments for the module. 'Maximum mark for coursework element' refers to the total aggregate percentage mark for all the pieces of coursework in the module.

### Summary of Faculty Reports

#### **ACCESS, DIGITAL AND DISTRIBUTED LEARNING**

There were no cases of plagiarism, contract cheating, other forms of cheating or cheating in examinations reported by ADDL for 2018/19.

The report from ADDL states that the non-existence of plagiarism offences is owing to the range of programmes for which ADDL has responsibility and the nature of assessment used.

The CPPD and PGCPD frameworks are delivered at Faculty level and any incidences of plagiarism would be reported through Faculties.

**No action proposed.**

#### **FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**2018/19**

| Type of Offence                      | Total recorded in Central Register | Total reported by Faculty |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Plagiarism                           | 21                                 | 26                        |
| Contract cheating                    | -                                  | -                         |
| Other form of cheating in coursework | 1                                  | -                         |
| Cheating in Examination              | -                                  | -                         |

#### **Summary of Faculty Report**

| SCHOOL                            | PLAGIARISM CASES | CONTRACT CHEATING | OTHER FORM OF CHEATING IN COURSEWORK | CHEATING IN EXAMINATION |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Arts and Humanities               | 7                | -                 | -                                    | -                       |
| Applied Social and Policy Studies | 16               | -                 | -                                    | -                       |
| Belfast School of Art             | 1                | -                 | -                                    | -                       |
| Communications and Media          | 2                | -                 | -                                    | -                       |
| Education                         | -                | -                 | -                                    | --                      |
| Law                               | -                | -                 | -                                    | -                       |

As in 2016/17, the majority of recorded cases of plagiarism were first offences occurring across all levels of study. However, unlike 2016/17 when all of the reported cases of plagiarism within the Faculty occurred at undergraduate level, seven offences in 2018/19 were at postgraduate level.

**Action taken / proposed at School/Faculty Level**

- Monitoring of plagiarism offences at postgraduate level;
- Emphasis placed on best academic practice and students advised of seriousness of plagiarism and penalties;
- Advice given on proper references practices;
- Implementation of electronic management of assessment and feedback;
- High level of tutor engagement with students;
- Assessment design limits possibility of plagiarism.

**FACULTY OF COMPUTING, ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

**2018/19**

| <b>Type of Offence</b>               | <b>Total recorded in Central Register</b> | <b>Total reported by Faculty</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Plagiarism                           | <b>42</b>                                 | <b>56</b>                        |
| Contract cheating                    | -   | -                                |
| Other form of cheating in coursework | <b>2</b>                                  | -                                |
| Cheating in Examination              | <b>7</b>                                  | -                                |

**Summary of Faculty Report**

| <b>SCHOOL</b>  | <b>PLAGIARISM CASES</b>                | <b>CONTRACT CHEATING</b> | <b>OTHER FORM OF CHEATING IN COURSEWORK</b> | <b>CHEATING IN EXAMINATION</b> |
|--|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Computing  | <b>14</b>                              | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Computing, Engineering & Intelligent Systems           | <b>10</b>                              | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Computing and Information Engineering                  | <b>11</b> [all relating to one module] | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Engineering  | <b>9</b>                               | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Belfast School of Architecture & the Built Environment | <b>12</b>                              | -                        | -   | -                              |

The Faculty reports a significant decrease in the number of recorded cases of plagiarism during 2018/19, with the majority of these being first offences at undergraduate level.

Note: the 2018/19 external examiner for MSc Fire Safety Engineering refers, in his report, to an instance of plagiarism in a dissertation but this offence does not appear to have been recorded on the Central Register.

### **Action taken / proposed at School/Faculty Level**

- All year groups briefed at induction on plagiarism and penalties;
- Staff reminded of importance and accurate logging of offences;
- Revised assessment marking sheets to include option for detection of possible plagiarism;
- Staff reminded of the need to be vigilant when invigilating examinations;
- Correct referencing highlighted in assessment briefs;
- Early assessment point in Year 1 with Turnitin submission and feedback;
- Consequences of plagiarism highlighted at module level and in Course Handbooks.

## **FACULTY OF LIFE AND HEALTH SCIENCES**

**2018/19**

| <b>Type of Offence</b>               | <b>Total recorded in Central Register</b> | <b>Total reported by Faculty</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Plagiarism                           | <b>48</b>                                 | <b>48</b>                        |
| Contract cheating                    | -   | -                                |
| Other form of cheating in coursework | -   | -                                |
| Cheating in Examination              | -   | -                                |

### **Summary of Faculty Report**

| <b>SCHOOL</b>                      | <b>PLAGIARISM CASES</b> | <b>CONTRACT CHEATING</b> | <b>OTHER FORM OF CHEATING IN COURSEWORK</b> | <b>CHEATING IN EXAMINATION</b> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Biomedical Sciences                | <b>9</b>                | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Geography & Environmental Sciences | <b>7</b>                | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Health Sciences                    | <b>14</b>               | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Nursing                            | <b>3</b>                | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences | <b>4</b>                | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Psychology                         | -                       | -                        | -   | -                              |
| Sport                              | <b>11</b>               | -                        | -   | -                              |

The Faculty reports a decrease in the number of cases of plagiarism recorded during 2018/19. As in 2017/18, no cases of plagiarism were reported by the School of Psychology. An increase in the number of plagiarism cases was reported by the School of Geography and Environmental Sciences and the School of Health Sciences, while all other Schools reported a decrease on the previous year. The majority of cases of plagiarism in 2018/19 were first offences.

**Action taken / proposed at School/Faculty Level**

- Assessments designed to avoid opportunities for plagiarism;
- Students informed of what plagiarism is and the framework of penalties at induction;
- Use of electronic plagiarism detection software across schools;
- Dissemination of Faculty’s Guidelines on Harvard Referencing;
- Introduction of Turnitin drop boxes across all modules in School of Psychology;
- Inclusion of Turnitin seminar within the undergraduate Study Skills programme in School of Psychology;
- Plagiarism workshops and sessions on proper referencing;
- Plagiarism Policy included in module handbooks.

**ULSTER UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**2018/19**

| <b>Type of Offence</b>               | <b>Total recorded in Central Register</b> | <b>Total reported by Faculty</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Plagiarism                           | <b>50</b>                                 | <b>50</b>                        |
| Contract cheating                    | -   | -                                |
| Other form of cheating in coursework | -   | -                                |
| Cheating in Examination              | <b>5</b>                                  | <b>5</b>                         |

**Summary of Faculty Report**

| <b>SCHOOL</b>                      | <b>PLAGIARISM CASES</b> | <b>CONTRACT CHEATING</b> | <b>OTHER FORM OF CHEATING IN COURSEWORK</b> | <b>CHEATING IN EXAMINATION</b> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Accounting, Finance & Economics    | <b>6</b>                | -                        | -   | <b>3</b>                       |
| Management, Leadership & Marketing | <b>10</b>               | -                        | -   | <b>1</b>                       |
| Hospitality & Tourism Management   | -                       | -                        | -   | <b>1</b>                       |

|                              |           |   |   |  |
|------------------------------|-----------|---|---|--|
| Global Business & Enterprise | <b>1</b>  | - | - |  |
| QAHE (London)                | <b>33</b> | - | - |  |

The majority of plagiarism and cheating offences recorded by the Ulster University Business School during 2018/19 were first offences. More than half of these offences occurred at QAHE. In regard to MSc Marketing, QAHE London, the Faculty reports that all 11 offences were of suspected collusion and outsourcing but were recorded as plagiarism because “collusion is recorded as plagiarism under University regulations, not contract cheating” and because of lack of evidence the offences have been recorded as plagiarism and dealt with accordingly. Note that University regulations distinguish collusion and contact cheating as distinct from plagiarism. The Faculty is concerned that not all instances of cheating in examinations are being detected, in view of frequency of toilet trips.

**Action taken / proposed at School/Faculty Level**

- Students educated in how to source and reference correctly;
- Increased electronic submission of written assignments through Turnitin;
- Revision of assessment on a regular basis to minimise possibilities for plagiarism;
- Guidance on Contact Cheating has been drawn up and plan to pilot the Turnitin Authorship Investigate Tool – at procurement stage/licences still to be secured.

## **Full Reports received from ADDL and Faculties**

### **ACCESS, DIGITAL AND DISTRIBUTED LEARNING**

The Director of Access, Digital & Distributed Learning (ADDL) has confirmed that no plagiarism offences have been recorded for 2018/19.

The report indicates that the non-existence of plagiarism offences is due to the range of programmes for which ADDL has responsibility and the nature of assessment used.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice supports graduate interns in completing projects which are contextualised within their employment, resulting in bespoke responses from students, which relate specifically to individualised work-based learning contexts, thus minimising the possibility of plagiarism.

The CPPD and PGCPD frameworks are delivered at Faculty level and any incidences of plagiarism would be captured and reported through the Faculties.

The adoption of online submission for the majority of modules offered as curriculum enhancement/CPD across the undergraduate and postgraduate frameworks (as per the University's Electronic Management of Assessment and Feedback policy) enables Module Coordinators to use 'Turn it in' to check student work more rigorously in relation to any threat of plagiarism.

Use of online submission will be monitored and reviewed by the respective programme team.

#### **Proposed Action**

No action proposed.

## FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

### Report on Instances of Plagiarism in Academic Year 2018/19

#### 1.0 Table 1 Instances of Plagiarism by School, Course and Year of Study

| SCHOOL                             | COURSE                             | YR  | No of Students |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----|----------------|
| Arts and Humanities                | • BA Hons English                  | • 1 | • 2            |
|                                    |                                    | • 2 | • 1            |
|                                    |                                    | • 3 | • 2            |
|                                    | • BA Hons English & History PT     | • 5 | • 1            |
|                                    | • BA Hons History with English     | • 2 | • 1            |
| Applied Social and Policy Sciences | • BSc Hons Politics                | • 3 | • 1            |
|                                    |                                    | • 2 | • 1            |
|                                    |                                    | • 1 | • 1            |
|                                    | • BSc Hons Crimn & Crim Justice FT | • 2 | • 1            |
|                                    |                                    | • 3 | • 1            |
|                                    |                                    | • 1 | • 7            |
|                                    | • BSc Hons Social Work             | • 1 | • 1            |
| • 2                                |                                    | • 1 |                |
| • BSc Hons Social Work PT          | • 4                                | • 2 |                |
| Belfast School of Art              | • BA Hons Product Design           | • 3 | • 1            |
| Communications and Media           | • BSc Hons Interactive Media       | • 2 | • 1            |
|                                    |                                    | • 3 | • 1            |
| Education                          | -                                  |     |                |
| Law                                | -                                  |     |                |
| Total No of Instances              |                                    |     | 26             |

#### Faculty Summary

- In total, 26 instances were recorded, compared with 14 in 2017/18.
- There were 10 recorded instances for part-time and postgraduate students.
- Offences were spread across the years of study, level 4 (15%), level 5 (31%), level 6 (27%) and level 7 (27%).

- As in 2016/17, the majority (96%) of recorded instances were first offences.
- The Faculty is concerned to note the number of Postgraduate Offences (27%) and action has been instigated to ensure that this situation is carefully monitored.

## **2.0 Associate Heads of School Commentaries**

### **Arts and Humanities**

There were seven recorded incidents of plagiarism within the School during the last academic year; these were isolated incidents indicating no problematic patterns.

The School continues to place great emphasis on best academic practice and advises all students of the seriousness of plagiarism and the penalties imposed if such malpractice is detected. Advice on proper referencing practices is given early across programmes, in accordance with the University's Plagiarism Policy and Procedures. Plagiarism warnings are given in course handbooks and various methods are used across the School, and across year groups, to ensure that students are au fait with referencing protocols and University policy regarding plagiarism in relation to coursework, presentations and examinations. Where plagiarism is detected staff respond efficiently and effectively and we find that the interview process is often enough to deter any further incidents. Full implementation of electronic management of assessment and feedback across the School (Turnitin) provides students with further incentive to comply with best academic practice.

### **Applied Social and Policy Studies**

A total of sixteen cases of Plagiarism were recorded on the register for the school. The main issue to note is the high rate of Plagiarism detected on the PG Diploma Professional Development in Social Work (6092).

The Course Director has provided a detailed commentary and has evidenced how extensively Plagiarism is highlighted to students on the programme (especially due to the Professional nature of the programme). The course team recently reviewed the level of plagiarism on the course and have put in place the following level of enhancements to reduce and hopefully eradicate it.

#### **Action Plan:**

1. To continue to insert presentations at taught inputs highlighting the link to both Academic qualities and Professional social work ethics.
2. To continue discussions at face to face student support sessions to ensure understanding of plagiarism and the consequences.
3. To revisit plagiarism with students at the time of submission hand in date.

### **Belfast School of Art**

There was one recorded case of plagiarism relating to a final year written assignment - an isolated instance in which it became apparent at interview that the student had difficulty in processing and managing source information. The student's

overall course result profile was second class lower division and at the final exam board they were coded as a successful leaver.

The low level of plagiarism detection within the School is due to the high level of tutor engagement with students at all stages of their learning journey, with very personal projects developed by each student within that particular discipline. Tutors are knowledgeable about their own areas of specialism and it is recognised that they can easily detect plagiarised work and concepts. In tandem the University's plagiarism policy and consequences of cheating are made clear to all students with learning activities designed to promote active student participation in the development of written assignments.

### **Communication and Media**

Within the School of Communication and Media there were only two reported cases of Plagiarism. Of note is that one student transferred into year 2 through Direct Entry and has struggled with transition and the differing approaches.

It is acknowledged that the number of reported cases are low due to the assessment design and format which means that the assignments are often production based, reflective reports or non-traditional outcomes which largely negates plagiarism by design.

**Professor Ruth Fee**  
**Associate Dean, Education**  
**AHSS**

## FACULTY OF COMPUTING, ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### PLAGIARISM REPORT, 2018-2019

Total number of plagiarism cases reported by Faculty for 2018-2019: 56  
[Total number of plagiarism cases reported by Faculty for 2017-2018: 80]

| SCHOOL   | NUMBER OF PLAGIARISM OFFENCES   |
|--|---|
| School of Computing                                    | 14  |
| School of Computing, Engineering & Intelligent Systems | 10  |
| School of Computing and Information Engineering        | 11  |
| School of Engineering                                  | 9   |
| Belfast School of Architecture & the Built Environment | 10 (Jordanstown-based courses)<br>2 (Belfast based courses)<br>TOTAL = 12 |

#### School of Computing

*From September 2018 to September 19<sup>th</sup> 2019*

| No of offences | Undergraduate / Post Graduate | No. of & Level of Offence                                   |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 14             | Undergraduate                 | 13 = 1 <sup>st</sup> Offence<br>1 = 2 <sup>nd</sup> Offence |

The School of Computing recorded 14 offences in the 18/19 Academic Year across a variety of provision:

BSc Hons Computing Science (2132) - 3  
BSc Hons Computing Technologies (7095) - 2  
BSc Hons Interactive Multimedia Design (2081) - 8  
BEng Hons Software Engineering (2076) - 1

From these 14 offences 6 were spread across a range of modules; however, 8 were related to a single Year 2 module – COM427.

#### Action taken within School:

The School continues to implement a number of steps in an effort to reduce the number of plagiarism offences:

- All year groups are briefed at Induction on plagiarism and the consequences of detection;
- All modules discuss the issue and the consequences of detection during the initial presentation of module assessment;
- Within the IMD module examples of 'similar source code' are discussed in a Tutorial session to ensure student clarity on what is / is not plagiarism;

- Staff are reminded of the importance of timely and accurate logging of occurrences of plagiarism.

### **School of Computing, Engineering & Intelligent Systems**

***From September 2018 to September 19<sup>th</sup> 2019***

| <b>No of offences</b> | <b>Undergraduate / Post Graduate</b> | <b>No. of &amp; Level of Offence</b>   |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 10                    | 7 UG and 3 PG                        | UG (all 1 <sup>st</sup> offences)<br>Year 2 = 4<br>Year 4 = 3<br>PG (all 1 <sup>st</sup> offences) |

The School of Computing, Engineering & Intelligent Systems recorded 10 offences in the 18/19 Academic Year across a variety of provision:

2134 BSc Computer Science  
7096 BEng Computer Engineering  
7098 BSc Information Technologies  
7748 MSc Data Science (F/T)  
7746 MSc Data Science (P/T)

Across 10 instances were first offences and spanned a range of modules. Examples of offence range from improper referencing to the use of electronic material in an online class test to 1 case of a student having used significant levels of 3<sup>rd</sup> party software code as part of their project submission while claiming the software was solely developed by them.

#### **Action taken within School:**

All were first offences and students were interviewed as per the policy on plagiarism. The School continues to implement a number of steps in an effort to reduce the numbers of plagiarism offences, including:

- Two students on the module BMG384 Management Information Systems which is delivered by a partner Faculty did not attend. All coursework plagiarism had the elements of coursework which was plagiarised discounted and no marks awarded. The module co-ordinator will monitor the class in the next academic and alert students on the policy on plagiarism and the consequences of detection.
- In terms of the project module, the course team have updated the assessment marking sheets for EEE521 to include an option for detection of possible plagiarism. This will flag to the module co-ordinator to investigate more rapidly post demo with the student.
- Staff have been reminded about the need for vigilance in examination invigilation.

- Module co-ordinators will ensure correct referencing is made clear as part of the assessment brief in post-graduate courses. Detections occurred due to a lack of correct referencing.
- Students across all programmes and years were reminded of the policy on plagiarism and the consequences of detection.

### **School of Computing and Information Engineering**

***From September 2018 to September 19<sup>th</sup> 2019***

| <b>No of offences</b> | <b>Undergraduate / Post Graduate</b> | <b>No. of &amp; Level of Offence</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 11                    | Undergraduate = 11                   | BSc Year 4 = 11                      |

The School of Computing and Information Engineering recorded 11 offences in the 18/19 Academic Year across a variety of provision:

2136 BSc Hons Computing  
 2142 BSc Hons Computing (Game Development)  
 6076 BSc Hons Computing (Internet Systems)  
 4246 BSc Hons Computing with Business  
 4248 BSc Hons Computing with Education

All 11 offences were detected in module COM506 Professional Web Services Development and were the result of a group of students that obtained source code from the Internet and submitted it as their own.

**Action taken within School:**

All were first offences and students were interviewed as per the policy on plagiarism. As a result, the work in question was discounted and no marks awarded. All students subsequently passed the module on the basis of other assessment elements.

The entire year group were reminded of the policy on plagiarism and the consequences of detection. As the School has now completed teach-out, no further action is required.

## **School of Engineering**

***From September 2018 to September 19<sup>th</sup> 2019***

| <b>No of offences</b> | <b>Undergraduate / Post Graduate</b> | <b>No. of &amp; Level of Offence</b>                               |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 9                     | UG = 8<br>PG = 1                     | UG:<br>Year 1: 3<br>Year 2: 2<br>Year 4: 3<br><br>PG:<br>Year 1: 1 |

The School of Engineering recorded 9 offences in the 18/19 Academic Year across a variety of provision:

- 3279: BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering (1)
- 3307: BSc (Hons) Biomedical Engineering (1)
- 3316: BSc (Hons) Technology with Design (2)
- 6237: BEng (Hons) Electronic Engineering (1)
- 6277: BEng (Hons) Clean Technology (1)
- 6688: BEng (Hons) Mechatronic Engineering (1)
- 7094: BSc (Hons) Engineering Science (1)
- 6668: MSc Advanced Composites and Polymers (1)

The offences were spread across a range of modules. One involved two students submitting lab reports that were plagiarised from each other. One was a CAD test where another student's work was submitted. One was an instance of a mobile phone in an examination and the rest were written reports with plagiarism detected by Turnitin across a number of modules.

### **Action taken within School:**

Standard procedures were followed, with first offences resulting in the plagiarised work being discounted and a formative interview held. The examination was declared void and the student required to repeat it.

The School continues to implement a number of steps in an effort to reduce the number of plagiarism offences, including:

- Early assessment point in year 1 is now a Turnitin submission with feedback, so it is anticipated that instances of poor referencing should reduce as this influence filters through to later years.
- Discussion and reminder of plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarism at (re)induction and within individual modules.

## **Belfast School of Architecture & the Built Environment**

***From September 2018 to September 19<sup>th</sup> 2019***

| <b>No of offences</b> | <b>Undergraduate / Post Graduate</b> | <b>No. of &amp; Level of Offence</b>  |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 10 – (Jordanstown)    | Undergraduate = 10                   | Undergraduate<br><br>FT<br>Year 1 = 3<br>Year 2 = 2<br>Final Year = 4<br><br>PT<br>Year 2 = 1 |
| 2 – (Belfast)         | Undergraduate - 2                    | Year 2  |
| Total for School = 12 |                                      |   |

The Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment recorded 12 offences in the 18/19 Academic Year across a variety of provision:

- BSc Hons Construction Engineering and Management (3239), Full-time = 2 offences
- BSc Hons Quantity Surveying and Commercial Management (6930 and 6931), Full-time and Part-time = 7 offences
- BEng Hons Architectural Engineering (7362), Full-time = 1 offence
- BA Hons Architecture (1034), Full Time = 2 offences

**(Jordanstown Courses)** - From these 10, offences 7 were spread across 6 modules:.

- BLD537
- BEN108
- BEN500
- ENE323
- SUR308
- SUR505

Four offences involved written examinations, with the other six offences were coursework-based.

There is no set pattern of modules with the majority of plagiarism offences. A small cluster of 3 offences was detected on one module – BEN100 – with inappropriate sharing of coursework amongst students.

**(Belfast Course)** - 2 offences were detected on one module – ARC109. On reviewing student's written assignment, it was evident that one piece of work, a detailed technical section, was practically identical.

Action taken within School:

All were first offences, with interviews held with students.

The School continues to implement a number of steps in an effort to reduce the number of plagiarism offences, for example:

- Plagiarism will continue to be flagged by course teams as a serious academic offence.
- New students will again be informed, at Welcome Week activities, of the need to avoid plagiarism. And for other years at reinduction.
- Plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarism is also reinforced across various years of study at both module level and also in Course Handbooks.

## **FACULTY OF LIFE AND HEALTH SCIENCES**

### **FACULTY REPORT ON PLAGIARISM 2018/19**

#### **OVERVIEW**

In the Faculty of Life & Health Sciences, there were 48 reported cases of plagiarism in academic year 2018/19 (Table 1). This represents a decrease from 61 cases in 2017/18.

The School of Psychology reported no cases of plagiarism during 2018/19 and the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science reported a similar number of cases as last year (n=4). The School of Geography and Environmental Sciences reported an increase to 7 cases. The School of Health Sciences had an increase to 14 cases during 2018/19, the reported cases were across each cohort year. The School of Nursing, School of Biomedical Sciences, and School of Sport reported decreases in plagiarism cases during 2018/19.

Schools continue to design assessment that avoids opportunities for plagiarism, they also ensure that students are well informed of what plagiarism means and the framework of penalties that Schools will enforce. Aligned to the Digital Futures Strategy and the introduction of the University Policy on fully online submission of coursework, students are made aware that their assessment will be more robustly monitored for plagiarism. Schools are using electronic plagiarism detection software in modules across year cohorts. Many of our professional programmes have greater external requirements with regards to professional practice, and professional and regulatory bodies to ensure that our procedures and policy are adhered too, for example in the School of Nursing, plagiarism is considered a Fitness to Practice issue.

In the Faculty, Schools are complying with Faculty and University policy on Plagiarism, with Schools educating and supporting students to minimize cases of plagiarism. All Schools report that the plagiarism policy and processes are discussed with students from induction in Year 1 and across different year cohorts. In conjunction with the Library, the Faculty is using the Faculty's Guidelines on Harvard Referencing. The Faculty Guidelines have been disseminated in a short leaflet and a longer version for students and staff, and are also available on BbLearn.

**Table 1:** The distribution of reported cases of plagiarism in the Faculty of Life & Health Sciences in 2018/19

| Level        | Biomedical Sciences | Geography & Environmental Sciences | Health Sciences | Nursing      | Pharmacy & Pharm Sc | Psychology   | Sport          | TOTAL 18/19 |
|--------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| 3/4          | 1 exchange          |                                    | 2               |              |                     |              | 3              | 6           |
| 5            |                     |                                    | 3               | 1            |                     |              | 2              | 6           |
| 6            | 6                   | 6                                  | 6               | 2            | 2                   |              | 1              | 23          |
| PgD/MS<br>c  | 2                   | 1                                  | 3               |              | 2                   |              | 5              | 13          |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>9 (17)</b>       | <b>7 (3)</b>                       | <b>14 (1)</b>   | <b>3 (9)</b> | <b>4 (4)</b>        | <b>0 (0)</b> | <b>11 (27)</b> | <b>48</b>   |

Filter Dates: 10 September 2018– 09 September 2019. Figures in brackets indicate 17/18 totals

During 2018/19, the vast majority (93.7%) of all recorded plagiarism cases were first offences. At undergraduate level, two second offences were recorded in the School of Geography and Environmental Science and one second offence recorded in the School of Sport (first offence was recorded in 17-18). At postgraduate no second offences were recorded.

Exemplars of School level practices are outlined below.

## **SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**

### **Plagiarism/Cheating Offences**

There were no reported plagiarism or cheating offences in 2018-19.

### **Current Procedures**

The School has a fully online submission process, which has allowed the introduction of Turnitin drop boxes across all modules on our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This has provided students with the opportunity to review draft Turnitin reports before their final submissions and has served to facilitate their understanding of the issues.

The School continues to use a Turnitin seminar within the undergraduate study skills programme. This process allows students to submit a draft of an assignment and produce a report, which they then subsequently work through with their studies advisor. In addition to this a plagiarism workshop has been developed and will be introduced into our studies advice system, within which students will be presented with a number of scenarios and asked whether they consider them to be plagiarism or not. It is hoped these various activities will help to raise awareness and understanding among students, but also aid staff in the detection of plagiarism offences.

## **SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**

1. The plagiarism register is confirmed as being up to-date with final entries being made after the June 2019 assessment period.
2. The plagiarism register was used on 7 occasions during the 2018-19 academic year which is 4 times more than 2017-18. Of the 7 cases, 6 related to final year

- undergraduate students while 1 related to postgraduate level. 5 cases were 1<sup>st</sup> offences while 2 cases were 2<sup>nd</sup> offences. There were no cheating offences during the 2018-19 year.
3. Five of the undergraduate offences related to copying material from a graduate. 4 of these offences occurred in two specific modules (EGM502 and EGM532). The other undergraduate offence related to copying material from an academic paper for a dissertation report (EGM534). The postgraduate offences related to EGM713 and resulted in the student copying material from Wikipedia. All students were interviewed and taken through the strict School plagiarism policy again. The 2<sup>nd</sup> offences had a mark of zero recorded for the piece of work.
  4. It is clear that the vast majority of our students are taking cognisance of the advice and the good practice promoted through the School's Undergraduate Geography and Environmental Sciences induction and tutorial programme. No offences occurred in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year.
  5. The occurrence of two second offences in one module (EGM532) related to a graduate's piece of work being shared via a WhatsApp group. The larger number of students copying from previous graduates means that final year students will be warned specifically about this throughout final year. There are constant reminders during final year induction and throughout the year about the seriousness of plagiarism and the efforts that the School puts in to identifying it. Dissertations (and all assessed components thereof) in particular are carefully scrutinized and are checked through Turnitin and students are advised of this policy at the start of their final year. All student dissertations were submitted electronically and checked through Turnitin by a dedicated member of staff. Likewise, the vast majority of assignments are submitted electronically and routinely checked through Turnitin.
  6. Within the School there continues to be a very clear policy which is aimed at teaching students from the start of their academic careers about good academic habits so that instances of plagiarism are minimized. This commences in first year with a session on plagiarism and referencing during induction week (Week 1) of the first semester. This is followed by a series of adviser tutorials in which sessions on plagiarism and referencing are key components. The School continues to remind and teach students about plagiarism and referencing in second and final year with induction reminders for all returning students. In addition to this, assessment criteria for coursework contain specific and identified mark allocations for referencing (where appropriate) so that students routinely get feedback on their approach to referencing. Students are also referred to the Faculty's Guidelines on Harvard Referencing and links to the guidelines are provided in the student support area for all programmes on Blackboard.

## **SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**

### **Reporting period Sep 2018 to Sep 2019**

No of recorded plagiarism cases in School BMS – **9**

6 Undergraduate (BMS 858, NUT506, BMS 502, , BIO509)

2 Postgraduate (BMS 858, NUT 710)

**8** Recorded instances were all first offences.

1 plagiarised case by an Exchange student.

There were no cheating offences in 2018-19 academic year.

**Key points,**

Reported cases in 18/19 are approximately 50% of that expected based on previous years (~16 incidences 17/18, ~30 incidences 16/17). A lecture on avoidance of plagiarism is given to each year group as part of School of Biomedical Sciences' induction processes and is scheduled in week 1, Semester 1, 2019. The lecture covers the basics of plagiarism avoidance including University policy, detection, sanctions. Currently in the School of Biomedical Sciences at least one module common to all students in first, second and final years uses electronic detection, this ensures a degree of continuity of message regarding plagiarism.

**SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES**

Staff within the School of Health Sciences adhere to the University's Plagiarism Policy and Procedures. Instances are dealt with by module coordinators, recorded and logged with the school administrative, and reported at Course Committee meetings.

All module handbooks detail the Plagiarism Policy, these can all be accessed through the Blackboard learn area for each module. All students receive this information in induction period, week 1 of all classes and through rolling induction, particularly in year 1.

There have been 14 cases of plagiarism recorded within the School of Health Sciences during the 2018-19 academic year, 11 at undergraduate level and 3 at postgraduate level.

There were no cheating occurrences recorded within the 2018-19 academic year.

**SCHOOL OF NURSING**

Assignment coursework continues to be submitted on line, as per University policy, for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Turnitin remains the preferred method of electronic submission by academic staff. Established incidences of plagiarism are recorded on the central register, in the student's personal file, with the appropriate penalty applied as per University policy. Three plagiarism cases were registered within the School for 18/19. This is a reduced number of cases from previous years, previously ranging from six to fifteen. One case was an undergraduate student (BSc Hons Nursing) and two post graduate students (PG Cert Non-Medical Prescribing). There were no recorded incidences of contract cheating.

All were first offences. Students were interviewed and counselled and penalties applied as per plagiarism policy (marks deducted based on the exclusion of the plagiarised work). Students were interviewed, and penalties applied accordingly. The PG students were interviewed by the Head of School/Course Director, with one of these cases escalated to the Dean of the Faculty. These students are registered on courses aligned to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), consequently PRSB regulations/ standards must be considered. Hence, the interview and discussion with the Dean for the PG students, despite these being a first offence.

Module coordinators across all courses will continue to guide and advise, to continue to reduce all instances of plagiarism, this will include referencing technique and

encouraging students to avail of the opportunity to check their work in Turnitin prior to submission.

Course directors/module coordinators continue to alert students to the relevant programme regulations, NMC guidance and the University policy is made available to students at induction, within module booklets and on Blackboard Learn. Students are expected and invited to engage with their studies advisor each semester and are aware they can contact their studies advisor at any time. Module coordinators endeavour to change the assignment titles annually to reduce the risk of plagiarism. Students have library induction, library sessions and REF works booked with the subject librarian. There are resources on VLE and module teams provide clear guidance and advice to students regarding assignment submission, writing skills, plagiarism and use of Turnitin.

## **SCHOOL OF SPORT**

The School of Sport adheres to the University's Plagiarism Policy and Procedures across all programmes. Instances are recorded at school level and dealt with by module coordinators and reported at Course Committee meetings.

All module handbooks detail the Plagiarism Policy so that all students receive this information in week 1 of class with module handbooks posted in the module area of BBL.

There have been 11 cases of plagiarism recorded within the School of Sport during the 2018-19 academic year, 7 at undergraduate level (6 first offences and 1 second offence) and 5 postgraduate offences (all first offences).

## **SCHOOL OF PHARMACY AND PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES**

**Programmes:** 6332 MPharm/ 7233 MSci Pharm Biosciences/ 7509 / 7510 MSc Pharm Sci/ 6642 PgDip Pharm Mgmt / 7769 MSc Pharm Mgmt/ 6962 BSc Pharm Sci/ 7717 BSc Applied Pharm Sci

### **(i) Plagiarism Policies and Procedures**

All instances of plagiarism that are not formative are dealt with in line with University's Plagiarism Policy. Students are introduced to the University Policy, a paper detailing good practice and highlighting plagiarism, and Turnitin® on their BBLearn course support area and in the Student Handbook. Study Skills in first year of the undergraduate programmes introduces students to academic writing and plagiarism and students are directed to Skills+ on BBlearn as an additional resource. In addition, further resources are provided in modules in which students have significant pieces of academic writing to complete.

Within first year students are introduced to Turnitin® during a workshop on plagiarism, and a session on referencing, both within PHA105 Professional Practice Skills 1 and BIO130 Professional Practice for Biosciences.

### **(ii) Issues arising**

**Plagiarism Offences:** There were a total of 4 plagiarism offences for the School in 2018/19 and no contract cheating offences.

Two of the offences were third year MPharm students (6332), within students' research proposals. These were both first offences and were directly attributable to poor referencing technique rather than a deliberate attempt to cheat. The students had a formative meeting with the MPharm course director, at which they were given a copy of the Wilmott and Harrison paper which is felt to illustrate clearly how to correctly use reference information (Wilmott and Harrison, 2003. Journal of Biological Education, 37 (3), pp. 139-140) in addition to a verbal explanation of the University Plagiarism policy.

The other two offences were on the on the MSc Pharmaceutical Science programme (7509 x 1; 7501 x 1). These were again both first offences. The Course Director got in touch with the students (online courses) and explained the plagiarism policy and penalties that would apply, and implications of any further instances. The students were also provided with the Wilmott and Harrison paper.

**Penalties imposed:** For the first offences, in line with the framework of penalties for plagiarism offences, a reduction in marks was utilised. This reduction ranged from 5% to 20% determined by the quantitative amount of material for each question that was plagiarised. Formative interviews were held with the module co-ordinator and/or Course Director for all first offences. During these interviews students were shown their Turnitin reports and asked to explain the nature of the plagiarism that took place.

**Contract Cheating:** There were no instances of Contract Cheating for the School in 2018/19.

**Trends:** In 2017/18 there were 3 recorded plagiarism offences, so this is a slight increase. By embedding the use of Turnitin® into all modules using computer-generated submissions, students have become aware that no instance of plagiarism will be missed. The School will continue to monitor the situation. Students are becoming more familiar with the use of the software and realising the importance of correct academic writing technique, which is an important skill for them to learn. Coupled with the Fitness to Practice issues around plagiarism for pharmacy students, the School is confident that by detecting these issues, we are strengthening the development of our students.

## ULSTER UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

### UUBS Plagiarism Report 2018/19

The report for UUBS and for QAHE (as at 18/09/19) covers a total of 22 and 33 student plagiarism cases, respectively (55 in total). These are summarised as follows:

#### UUBS

| <b>Department</b>                       | <b>Level/Year</b>   | <b>Nature of offence</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| Accounting Finance & Economics (AFE)    | 9 undergraduate students, across 3 separate courses, from second and final year. 3 of these offences (one year 3 and two year 4) were exam related, involving possession of mobile phone and/or notes. The remainder were coursework related.       | All were first offences (with follow-up support given) apart from 1 student who has been caught cheating in examinations twice (he had gone through the disciplinary process for a related incident and has also been seen by senior UUBS staff). |
| Management Leadership & Marketing (MLM) | 11 students, all undergraduates, across 4 courses, 9 first year students (3 of which were part-time Business Studies) and 2 second year students. One offence was exam related (mobile phone possession) and the remainder were coursework related. | All were first offences (with further support given).   |
| Hospitality & Tourism Management (HTM)  | 1 undergraduate student (year 3) in possession of a mobile phone.   | A first offence. Also to note, some work done in HTM this year around contract cheating (there were some suspicions around the work of three students).   |
| Global Business & Enterprise (GBE)      | 1 postgraduate (Distance Learning) student, coursework related.   | A first offence.  |

**QAHE** (Birmingham & London). Incidences only recorded for QAHE London students this year (probably reflective of the much larger numbers of students in London)

| <b>QAHE Campus/Course</b>  | <b>Level/Year</b>  | <b>Nature of offence</b>   |
|--|--|--|
| QAHE, London<br>MSc International Business, Extended (Grad Cert) and Advanced Practice | <p>20 students, across 5 different modules for coursework</p> <p>At time of writing this report, a further 2 students have been detected for external collusion on 4 separate occasions, over the three modules undertaken in Semester 3. These will be added to the Register.</p> | <p>All first offences. However, the extent of this detection, particularly in the Graduate Certificate component has been discussed in detail with the QAHE Course Director and Associate Dean, who will be considering what actions to put in place.</p> <p>These students were awarded a mark of zero in everything and coded N4 (retaking their qualification with attendance). In essence they will resit for a capped mark, which may allow completion of the Grad Cert but will not allow progression to Masters. These students will all be interviewed by senior staff and formative activity put in place, as required.</p> |
| MSc Marketing, London  | 11 students, spanning 5 modules. Notably 6 of these related to MKT715 Research Proposal and 1 to Dissertation (with targeted follow-up undertaken).  | All but one (Strategy and Innovation CW) were first offences. All of these had suspected external collusion and outsourcing, often with two or three students collaborating in this. However, they have been recorded as plagiarism as collusion is recorded as plagiarism under Ulster regulations, not contract cheating. No QAHE/Ulster students have been proven guilty of contract cheating, largely due to our   |

|                |  |  |
|----------------|--|--|
|                |  | requirements for evidence. Students are met and advised accordingly and given a capped resit, as detailed above. |
| MBA FT, London | 2 students on ECO701 (CW related), on on the MBA and one on the MBA with AP. | First offences.  |

### Comments/Ongoing Action

- A few exam-related offences have been detected but we remain concerned at the number of toilet trips occurring in a typical exam hall and the likelihood that a significant number of potential offences remain undetected.
- Work continues in UUBS and QAHE, both in the detection and reporting of plagiarism (and contract cheating) instances but also in educating students proactively from the outset, and at various points through their studies, in how to source and correctly reference appropriate materials. We have gained more experience in detecting occurrence, although sometimes these efforts are frustrated by appeal outcomes and by a lack of clarity around collusion and contract cheating.
- Year 1 skills development modules are cited by a number of Departments as an important starting point but the message is then reinforced throughout the courses/years. The subject librarians play a very important role in this regard. Increased electronic submission of written assignments through Turnitin (as part of the Electronic Management of Assessment policy) should also assist. Staff are also reminded to ensure assessment is revised on a regular basis and course teams have met (for example joint QAHE/GBE activity in Magee) to consider assessment, consistency of approach and 'designing out' plagiarism.
- The issue of contract cheating has been considered in more detail this year, with QAHE and UUBS staff. Fiona McCloy prepared a paper (attached), working closely with Dr Peter Green (and QAHE colleagues) which came to UUBS L&T Committee and University Digital Learning Sub-Committee. The aim was to raise awareness with colleagues and particularly in regard to a project which we still hope to run jointly between ourselves and QAHE, to pilot the Turnitin Authorship Investigate Tool. It had been agreed by the PVC Education/UUBS ED and QAHE that we would jointly pay for 2 licences and Andy Jaffrey was progressing this. However this work is sitting at procurement stage and licences have not yet been secured.

## Guidance on Contract cheating

This paper is in response to the potential risk of contract cheating at Ulster. Contract cheating is a term coined by Thomas Lancaster and Robert Clarke from Birmingham City University in 2006. It is the process by which students can get someone else to create an original work, which the student can submit as their own, which can often involve a fee. This topic has had recent media coverage due to a reported increase in students purchasing assignments from third-party companies. However, contract cheating is only one form of violating academic integrity.

Contract cheating has the potential to undermine educational quality and risk institutional reputation. This happened at a number of institutions in Australia in 2014 due to an exposé by a local newspaper and at Greenwich School of Management in 2017 after a BBC Panorama investigation. The third-party companies currently act within the law. However, the higher education sector is lobbying the UK government to change this. The third-party companies are savvy in their marketing approach and can provide a convincing argument that they are doing nothing wrong and providing help to students, e.g. using social media campaigns and advertising their services as academic writing services. The BBC uncovered a YouTube star being paid to promote a cheating service in 2017.

Student welfare and personal security can be an issue, with cases of students being blackmailed by the third-party companies, due to the personal information students provide, e.g. credit card details. Students often aren't aware of the seriousness or potential repercussions of using such services. Contract cheating can be difficult and time consuming to identify and prove. It is not picked up by plagiarism detection software, as it is an original source. Possible evidence could include metadata and naming of assignments, changes in writing style, change in process/workflows, multiple geographic logins to VLE from the same account at similar time, etc.

At Ulster there appears to be relatively low incidents of contract cheating. However, sector wide it appears to be increasing and generally under reported (Newton, 2018). With the number of companies providing these services increasing and price of assignments decreasing. External partnerships and international students could be potentially vulnerable, based on the characteristics of high-profile cases in the sector.

A sector wide response to confront contract cheating and create a hostile environment for it is underway. The QAA has established a UK Academic Integrity Advisory Group, of which the UUSU President, Kevin McStravock, is a member. Current thinking promotes a holistic multi-pronged approach to academic integrity and contract cheating. This could include:

- Academic integrity campaign, for staff and students. Introduce a common language and easy to understand terminology around academic integrity; clarify the difference between plagiarism and contract cheating, etc.; to raise awareness of the risks; instil pride in students own achievements; provide study skills for students; online tutorial/training; tips for staff on what to look out for; highlighting help, support and guidance.

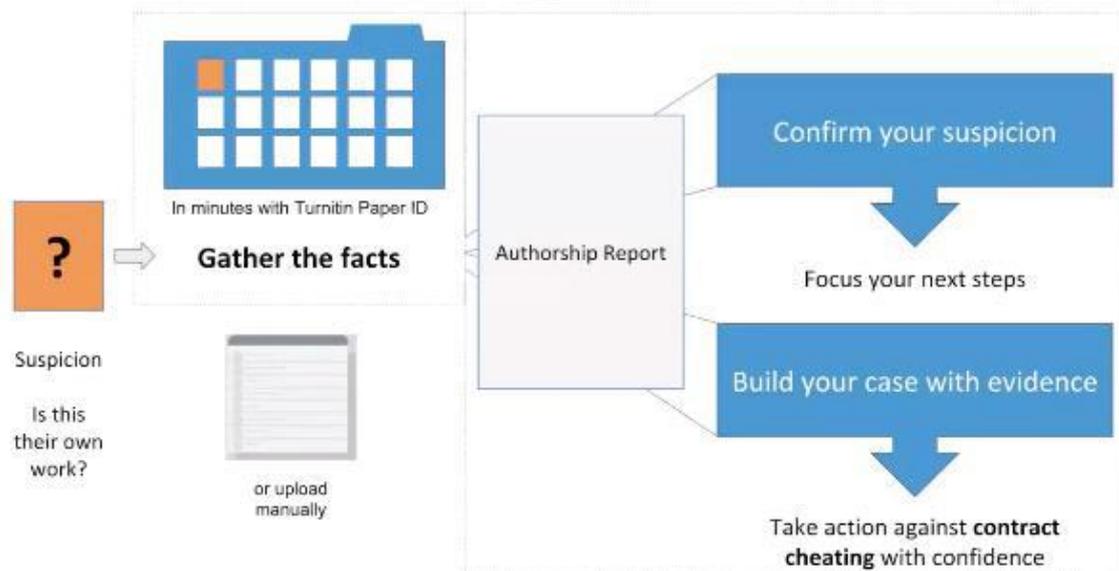
- Consider assessment design to make it more difficult to replicate, to minimise the risks. Note, a wide range of assessment types can be outsourced. Authentic and personalised assessment can be effective, e.g. a face-to-face component, such as a VIVA or video blog to discuss or reflect on the assessment.
- Review policies and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose. With clear definitions, terminology, guidance and disciplinary procedures and support.
- Academic integrity role, with ownership for supporting and promoting academic integrity.
- Record keeping - keep track of potential cases and outcomes.
- Monitor the targeting of students in their communication channels and attempt to reduce this, e.g. ads on social media.
- Supporting technology – to help identify and evidence potential misconduct cases.

### Turnitin Authorship Investigate

Authorship Investigate is a new tool developed by Turnitin which aims to ‘help investigators quickly gather facts, collate information, and make impartial judgments, when suspicions of contract cheating are raised’ (Authorship Investigate website). Turnitin have worked with forensic linguistics and some education institutions to help develop this tool.

It checks a paper submission (uploaded manually or from Turnitin), looking for suspicious or unusual characteristics, e.g. metadata and file name. It compares the paper with previous student submissions via Turnitin, looking for any unexpected changes in language. It creates an Authorship Report, which will recommend investigation if evidence of possible cheating is uncovered - in terms of readability, document information, sentences and vocabulary. The investigator can then use academic judgement, informed by institutional policies and procedures, to decide how to proceed.

### What does Authorship Investigate do?



Tool demo by Jamie Whitehead, Turnitin Account Manager:

<https://ulster.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=e79a9673-51b4-4e2c-bb09-aa1500b7ef1c>

Dr Peter Green, Head of Partnerships, UUBS/QA Business School, viewed the demo and can see benefits in Turnitin Authorship Investigate or gathering statistically robust evidence in a timely manner. From a few recent suspected incidents at Ulster, gathering evidence can be difficult and time consuming. Timing is important, as students may need to have CAS extended due to appeal taking 60 days, especially an issue for international students. Note, however, due to this tool being new, its algorithms are relatively untested in the sector. It can support evidence gathering, however, it is unlikely to provide absolute proof.

Authorship Investigate costs £9,205 per annum for two licences (five licences - £11,515, ten licences - £15,365), with a possible 10% saving with a multi-year agreement. Turnitin support a holistic approach to academic integrity, with the licence including user training, project planning and a community of practice.

It is proposed that two licences will be procured at Ulster, jointly between Education portfolio/UUBS and QAHE, in accordance with procurement legislation. With one licence based with Education portfolio/UUBS and one licence based with QAHE, with one point of contact for each, who has access to the tool. Authorship Investigate is a stand-alone software, that links to the current institutional installation of Turnitin (Feedback Studio). Any suspected cases of contract cheating can be forwarded to the known point of contact, for the submission to be checked using Authorship Investigate. The QAHE licence could be based with the Academic Integrity Officer. It is for discussion where the Education portfolio/UUBS licence will be best placed. ODL can support the technology, being the connection between Ulster and Turnitin.

### References and further reading

- Newton, P. M. (2018) How Common Is Commercial Contract Cheating in Higher Education and Is it Increasing? A Systematic Review. *Frontiers in Education*, 3 (67).  
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/educ.2018.00067/full>
- TEQSA (2017) Good Practice Note: Addressing contract cheating to safeguard academic integrity  
<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/g/files/net2046/f/good-practice-note-addressing-contract-cheating.pdf?v=1507082628>
- QAA (2017) Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education  
[https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/contracting-to-cheat-in-higher-education.pdf?sfvrsn=f66af681\\_8](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/contracting-to-cheat-in-higher-education.pdf?sfvrsn=f66af681_8)
- QAA Academic Integrity - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-do/academic-integrity>
- Thomas Lancaster, contract cheating - <http://thomaslancaster.co.uk/contract-cheating/>

### Media coverage

- FactCheck: Universities catch less than 1% of 'bought in' essays, own records suggest - <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-universities-catch-less-than-one-per-cent-of-bought-in-essays-own-records-suggest>
- BBC3 Programme, Students On The Edge – Degrees for Sale (iPlayer) - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p06lp27r/students-on-the-edge-3-degrees-for-sale>
- University bosses call for ban on essay-writing companies - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-45640236>
- YouTube star being paid to sell cheating - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-43956001>
- To tackle student cheating, we need to reimagine university assessment

<https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2018/jun/13/to-tackle-student-cheating-we-need-to-reimagine-university-assessment>

- Cheating at top universities soar by 40% -  
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/apr/29/cheating-at-top-uk-universities-soars-by-30-per-cent>
- MyMaster essay cheating scandal: More than 70 university students face suspension -  
<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/mymaster-essay-cheating-scandal-more-than-70-university-students-face-suspension-20150312-1425oe.html>

### **Institutional approaches**

- University of Leeds, Academic Integrity online tutorial -  
<https://www.leeds.ac.uk/vle/students/assess/academicintegrity/>
- Swansea University, Academic Misconduct Procedure -<https://www.swansea.ac.uk/academic-services/academic-guide/assessment-and-progress/academic-misconduct-procedure/1-definition-of-academic-integrity-and-academic-misconduct/>

Prepared by Fiona McCloy, ODL, May 2019

In consultation with Andy Jaffrey, Kevin McStravock, Dr. Peter Green, and Heather Farley